

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
POLLUTION REPORT

US EPA RECORDS CENTER REGION 5



545220

I. HEADING

Date: January 3, 1996
Subject: ~~Karl's Retreading Tire Fire~~ Fire, Traverse City, Grand
Traverse County, Michigan
From: Rose Ellison, OSC, U.S. EPA, RS1, Grosse Ile,
Michigan
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POLREP No.: ~~POLREP 1~~ Initial (Emergency Response)

II. BACKGROUND

Site No.:	ZZ
Response Authority:	CERCLA
CERCLIS No.:	-
NPL Status:	No
Start Date:	December 30, 1995
Demobilization Date:	N/A
Completion Date:	N/A

III. SITE INFORMATION

- A. Incident Category Tire Fire at Scrap Tire Facility
B. Site Description and Location

1. Site location

The Karl's Retreading Tire Fire (KR) site is an emergency response to a tire fire located south of Traverse City, Grand Traverse County, Michigan (44° 39.7'N, 85°40.0'W). The KR site is an approximately 4.5 acre property that consists of a

building with loading dock, several semi-trailers, and 500,000 shredded and whole tires staged on 1 acre of the parcel. The tires are in piles that range from 4 feet up to 30 feet in height. The site is currently owned by Steve Hubert.

The site is bordered by residences located on Compton Court to the west, Sawyer Woods Drive to the north, forested land to the south, and light industry and residences to the east. The site is in a rural/residential/ area with some light industry. An elementary school (Blair Elementary) is located across Sawyer Road and approximately

500 feet to the east of the KR site. Residences are located approximately 300 feet to the west of the fire as well as within 500 feet to the south and east of the site. Cox Pond and Beitner Creek are located approximately 1/3 mile north of the site.

2. Description of threat

The Emergency Coordinator of Grand Traverse County contacted the U.S. EPA on December 30, 1995, and requested assistance.

C. Preliminary Assessment/Site Inspection Results

U.S. EPA On-Scene Coordinator (OSC) Rose Ellison and the Technical Assistance Team (TAT) responded to the site at 1200 hours on December 30, 1995. At that time, the tire pile was actively burning. Initial air monitoring was conducted on smoke directly being generated by burning and smoldering tire piles on the north side of the site. Results indicated that particulates (up to 10 mg/m³) and carbon monoxide (up to 30 ppm) were being generated by the smoke in the immediate area of the fire. This smoke was being blown off site and into nearby residential areas. It was determined that the impact of the smoke on the residents needed to be determined and monitored on an ongoing basis.

IV. RESPONSE INFORMATION

A. Situation

1. Current situation

The Karl's Retreading Tire Fire is an active tire recycling facility. On December 29, 1995, at approximately 0930 hours, the fire was ignited by overheating of scrap tire material by the on-site

tire shredder. The fire was reported to the Grand Traverse County Rural Fire Department at 0930. The Grand Traverse County Rural Fire Department with volunteer firefighters and firefighting equipment from surrounding communities attempted to put the fire out with water on December 29, 1995. This attempt was unsuccessful and further attempts were suspended as the nearest hydrant is approximately 5 miles from the site. Water for fire fighting was being transported to the site by tankers.

A command post was established in the Blair Elementary School (east of the fire).

2. Removal activities to date

December 30, 1995: The U.S. EPA OSC and Technical Assistance Team mobilized to the site. After meeting with the Incident Commander, the OSC determined that assistance was required in assessing air quality and in determining the impact of the smoke plume on businesses and residences surrounding the site. The OSC also requested support from the U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Strike Team (AST) for air monitoring and site documentation. At that meeting, it was determined between U.S. EPA, County Emergency Management, and the Incident Commander that the best way to approach the fire was by mechanical methods.

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The property owner, Steve Hubert, agreed with U.S. EPA to assume financial responsibility for the fire fighting and hired an independent contractor, Northern A-1. Northern A-1 is to work with the fire fighters by dismantling the tire piles and burying the burning waste in excavated trenches and pits to extinguish the fire by smothering it.

December 31, 1995: United States Coast Guard Atlantic Strike Team Members arrive on site to support EPA activities.

Workers from Karl's Retread move salvageable trailers not in close proximity to the fire off the property in order to provide additional work space. Because the site is only 4.5 acres and much of that is tree-covered, working space is severely limited and crews are not able to spread the burning tires out over a large area. The approach to the two largest piles of whole and shredded tires (approximately 30 and 20 feet high, respectively) remain to be determined due to safety concerns.

TAT and Strike Team members established a set pattern of air monitoring stations that were assessed twice daily. In addition, random readings were collected downwind of the fire throughout the day to assess the amount and content of smoke leaving the site. At the request of County Health Officials, the OSC arranged for several nearby residences to have interior monitoring for levels of carbon monoxide. No elevated levels were detected.

January 1, 1996: Continuous air monitoring has been established to the west of the fire, at the trailers at Compton Court. Readings indicate nuisance levels of particulates, rather than hazardous levels. No elevated readings of organic vapors, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, or other components were detected. Although no health hazard was detected, residents of the trailers on Compton Court were offered, by county authority, the option of voluntarily evacuating their homes during hours of firefighting operations. A shelter was established at the Blair Township Hall to support these individuals.

Attempts to remediate the tire pile and extinguish the fire continue with volunteer firefighters supporting and protecting the heavy equipment being used by Northern A-1. The north edge of the pile, where tires are only staged a few feet deep, is being pulled apart by an excavator and placed into pits and trenches to be smothered with dirt.

Interest in the fire by local media continues to intensify. National coverage is initiated by a CBS affiliate.

Because all Grawn Township firefighters are volunteers, a manpower emergency arises because individuals are required to return to their normal jobs on January 2. Efforts by the fire chief to arrange for the Cadillac District State Fire Marshal to organize the "borrowing" of firefighters from other departments throughout the state have not been successful. As a result, there are not enough firefighters available to man the tire operation tomorrow.

Late in the evening, the PRP agreed to pay the volunteer firefighters to work the fire on January 2. As a result, the minimum required number of firefighters are arranged. However, funding for firefighters after January 1 and where personnel will come from is not yet determined.

January 2, 1996: Tire fire fighting operations continue. Firefighters are being paid with funds appropriated by Grand Traverse County. The plea for assistance by the Fire Chief has generated a large outpouring of firefighting personnel from throughout the state. Volunteers will begin arriving for work on January 3. The state is assisting by providing MDNR personnel to assist in trucking water and with personnel to organize volunteers.

The USCG Air Station Traverse City transports EPA contractor and USCG personnel to the fire site via helicopter allowing video of the fire and surrounding area to be filmed.

A meeting was held in the afternoon of January 2, 1996, with OSC Ellison, Fire Chief Muller, County Coordinator Scott, State Fire Marshall, and other state and local officials. Fire Chief Muller requested assistance for additional fire fighters and/or pay for volunteers that would come out. The representative from Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) committed tankers and personnel to assist with transportation of water to the fire. The State Fire Marshall and other state officials provided personnel to assist in organizing volunteer fire fighters to come in from around the state to provide assistance on a continuing basis through 1/8/96.

Media interest continues to be intense.

B. Planned Removal Activities

1. Continue monitoring of random and stationary air sampling points for particulates, organic vapors, and other potentially fire generated constituents.
2. Collect air samples for full laboratory analyses.
3. Northern A-1 will continue to fight the tire fire with the safety support of the firefighters.
4. Continue to evaluate ongoing potential threat to the surrounding residents and employees of businesses.

C. Next Steps

Continue to operate tire fire fighting activities with safety support of local and visiting firefighters.

Assess methods to address the large (20 to 30 foot) piles of burning tires by pulling it down and spreading out the tires.

D. Key Issues

The Blair Elementary School was closed due to the Christmas and New Years holidays until January 2, 1996. On January 1, 1996, the school was closed from January 2, 1996, until January 8, 1996, due to the concern about wind shifts generating dust clouds that would go toward the school and the fact that the school is being used as the command post for the incident.

The PRPs have agreed to pay fire fighters on 1/2/96. After 1/2/96, Grand Traverse County is assuming financial responsibility for paying the firefighters.

Residents, living to the west and south of the site were voluntarily evacuated. The following numbers of persons were voluntarily evacuated on the following days: 6 persons on 12/29/95, 8 persons on 12/31/95, and 48 persons on 1/1/96. Residences have been evacuated on an as need basis after 1/1/96.

V. COST INFORMATION

Estimated costs as of January 2, 1996:

<u>Budgeted</u>	<u>Spent</u>	<u>Remaining</u>
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TAT	\$ 25,000	\$ 15,757	\$ 9,243
U.S. EPA	\$ 10,000	\$ 4,547	\$ 5,453
USCG AST	<u>\$ 15,000</u>	<u>\$ 5,694</u>	<u>\$ 9,306</u>
TOTAL:	\$ 50,000	\$ 25,998	\$ 24,002